

**Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2019**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at the American Legion, 1708 Commonwealth Ave., Richmond VA

Members Present

- Victor Angry
- Carl Bedell
- Carl Bess
- Paige Cherry
- Michael Dick
- James Icenhour
- Thurraya Kent
- Tammi Lambert
- John Lesinski
- Kathleen Murphy
- Kathy Owens
- Bryce Reeves
- Julie Waters
- Frank G. Wickersham, III, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council
- Frank Finelli, Veterans Services Foundation
- Steven Combs, Acting Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- John Cosgrove
- Gordon Helsel
- Susan Hippen
- Lyla Kohistany
- Jason Miyares
- Frank Reyes

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Deputy Secretary Kathleen Jabs
- Carrie Ann Alford, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Annie Walker, Deputy Commissioner, DVS
- Charlie Palumbo, DVS
- Keta Feters, DVS
- Beverly VanTull, DVS
- Brian Pickral, DVS
- Roni Sepanski, DVS
- Greg Escobar, DMV

- Dalton Lee, DMV
- Karla Boughey, VSF

Guests Present

- Al Sample
- CDR Elaine Goldsworthy, Royal Navy

Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet

- Revised Agenda
- Reports (Agenda Item V)
 - Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
 - Veterans Services Foundation
 - DVS Update
- Handout that coordinates with presentation by Ms. Brandi Jancaitis (VI.b)
- Handout that coordinates with presentation by Ms. Palumbo (VI.c)
- Proposed Amendment to Bylaws (Agenda Item VII.a)
- Handout on Roles and Responsibilities during Session (VII.c)
- Proposed 2020 Meeting schedule (VII.d)
- Reports from the work groups (VII.e)

Call to Order

Chairman Dick called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed the BVS members and asked Ms. Carrie Ann Alford to call the roll. The roll was called and a quorum was determined with 15 of 22 members present. One member arrived shortly after the meeting started for a total of 16 members present.

The chair asked the DVS staff and other guests to introduce themselves to the board. Their names are recorded above.

Approval of Agenda and August 22, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Dick stated that there was a request to amend the agenda by moving VII. New Business f. Legislator's pre-session reports to VII.a., as Senator Reeves need to leave the meeting a few minutes early to get to the VMAC meeting. There was no discussion or opposition. Chairman Dick called for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Mr. Jim Icenhour made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Victor Angry, to approve the amended agenda. The motion carried **unanimously**. (*Attachment 1*)

Chairman Dick noted that there would no longer be a copy of the previous meeting's minutes in the packets and they had all received an electronic copy ahead of the meeting. He asked if there were any amendments to the minutes. There were none. He requested a motion to approve the minutes of the August 22 meeting. Mr. John Lesinski made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Paige Cherry to approve the minutes of the August 22 meeting. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Reports

Frank Wickersham, III the **Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)** Chairman, gave a short report on the JLC, their October 16 meeting and policy priorities

for 2020, which was included as an attachment to the letter. Mr. Wickersham stated that the next JLC meeting is December 18 at the American Legion, in Richmond. (*Attachment 2*)

Frank Finelli, the **Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)** Chairman, gave a short report on the VSF and their most recent meeting on September 19, and gave a report on the event with Governor Northam in Richmond where VSF received a donation from Smithfield Foods for \$150,000 to aid veteran homelessness programs. (*Attachment 3*). Mr. Finelli informed the BVS that Tiffany Robinson, assistant to the executive director, has left VSF and fundraising activities will be affected by Tiffany leaving and the staff will have to pull back on activities with the staff shortfall.

Mr. Icenhour thanked Mr. Finelli for the VSF brochures and stated they were useful in getting people to donate when he meets someone in his area who says they would like to donate to veterans.

Delegate Kathleen Murphy asked about VSF implementing fundraising emails. Mr. Finelli said that they are not currently doing that. She recommended that said they start using such emails, as it is a very good way to raise funds.

Ms. Kathy Owens asked if the administrative position is posted yet? Mr. Finelli said not yet, but they are going to have a discussion with AC Combs and the Secretary about when to post the job announcement.

Chairman Dick asked if VSF is part of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Mr. Finelli said no, they could use help in navigating that process and need to look into if it would limit their actions. Ms. Alford added that VSF is part of the state-level combined giving program – Combined Virginia Campaign (CVC), and Tiffany did man the table at the recent CVC campaign event at the James Monroe Building and state employees can give through the CVC.

Delegate Kathleen Murphy asked about VSF partnering with chambers of commerce. Mr. Finelli said they are working on it, but they could use help in navigating that process.

Chairman Dick thanked Mr. Finelli for his report and turned to **Department of Veterans Services (DVS)** Acting Commissioner Steve Combs for the DVS report.

AC Combs thanked everyone for their support of DVS and its programs and asked Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker to talk about her team. DC Walker turned it over to Charlie Palumbo who stated that she was leaving as of November 20 for a new opportunity with Amazon as a business development director. DC Walker then introduced the new VTAP Program Manager, Keta Feters who comes to DVS from DOD as a civilian employee. Ms. Feters gave a few words of introduction about herself and stated she was happy to be at DVS.

AC Combs mentioned a few highlights from his written report to the board (*Attachment 4*). He mentioned that the V3 program has now passed the 55,000 hires mark since inception and that DC Walker was now serving as president of the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) and she and her SAA team went to Florida recently for NASAA training.

AC Combs also mentioned that Donna Harrison, the DVS Criminal Justice Director spoke at a Veterans Day event at Deerfield Correctional Center which has over 200 veterans. They live in a dorm together and Donna and her staff work to make sure they transition back to communities successfully and have their benefits.

He also mentioned the wreath laying ceremonies coming up on December 14th at the three state cemeteries in Amelia, Dublin and Suffolk.

AC Combs then turned to handouts that were being passed out to the group to review the budget process and online resources through the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) and the General Assembly's budget website. He stated that the agency package DVS submitted is posted to the DPB website and is available for public inspection. This is not a final budget, just what the agency requested. All agencies submit their budgets and the Governor's team works with the secretaries to decide what will go in the Governor's introduced budget – but the budget that will be presented on December 17 is the starting point. The legislature will then take the Governor's budget and review it and amend it. AC Combs stated that “the Governor proposes and the General Assembly disposes” of appropriations.

Ms. Alford stated that in December, once the Governor's introduced budget is public she will email the board members with all the live links so that it is easy to find. She also reminded them that the budget is tracked and updated in the bill matrix sent out during session, just like bills are tracked and members can follow along in the excel spreadsheet distributed weekly.

Mr. Lesinski asked for an update regarding the veterans care centers – are you still waiting on funding? Should we be nervous? AC Combs stated that no, we shouldn't be nervous, but he is surprised it is taking so long to release the funding. However, it is three times the normal amount of funding released by the VA for these projects and they are going through all the applications and will release the funding at one time so it is taking longer.

Mr. Lesinski followed up and asked about timing. AC Combs stated that it will still take about two years to build once the construction dollars are there.

Mr. Icenhour asked about the veterans care centers construction as well, mentioning that the original plan was for the General Assembly to “ante up” the construction funding, and asked how is that affecting this slow down with VA?

AC Combs stated that the costs of increased beds from original design that the GA appropriated funding for and the costs of construction have gone up to \$120M for the two care centers. The VA money will cover over half and then the state dollars can be shifted to other projects.

Mr. Icenhour asked about talking points for Session in meeting with the legislators? Ms. Alford said yes, talking points will be distributed in late December or early January ahead of Session.

PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Alford gave an update on the **budgetary requests for DVS during Session**. She began with an update of the new DVS organizational chart and DVS locations map for the members. She highlighted some of the agency's budget requests that had been given "Priority 1" status. This included staff needs – both increasing salaries to be more competitive, especially in Northern Virginia, but also increasing the number of staff positions in key areas to meet demands.

The presentation included budget items:

- **Locality-based salary adjustments** for Benefits & VVFS field staff in NoVa offices, plus DVS attorneys, making it possible to recruit and retain the most qualified employees.
- Increase **"Floater" positions** in Benefits by 2 FTEs to reduce the number of office closures and service disruptions in the West and East Regions, as well as maintain adequate staffing in busy offices, ensuring Benefits maintains the highest levels of customer service for Virginia veterans and their families.
- Increase VVFS **Veteran Peer Specialists (VPS)** positions by 3 FTEs – they provide critical support and we cannot meet the current demand
- Increase VVFS **Resource Specialists** positions by 2 FTEs – they provide critical support and we cannot meet the current demand
- Funding to hire new **Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) Program Manager** to lead VMSDEP operations. VMSDEP is experiencing growth as the change in eligibility requirements that went into effect July 1, 2019 have opened the program up to potentially thousands of new users. The VMSDEP Program Manager will play a key role in operations and training for VMSDEP staff and in communications with VMSDEP clients and potential clients.
- Increase **VTAP Regional Transition Coordinators** by 2 (1 each in Hampton Roads and NoVa) to support transitioning service members on military installations. This year VTAP had 208 installation visits supporting the transition managers and augmenting a variety of services such as career coaching, networking, and outreach events. The additional positions will increase the number of service members served on-base through one-on-one assessments.
- Agency Operations – IT, Finance and HR need additional staff to meet the demands of a growing agency

Ms. Alford also reviewed the Non-General Fund budget items, including the Care Centers, SAA and Cemeteries. The Virginia Veterans Care Center is requesting 21 new full time positions to support a new C.N.A nursing training program; New nursing (RN, LPN, C.N.A) positions to help with staffing shortages; and Continuing building improvement projects.

Ms. Alford concluded by stating that there was nothing to report on legislatively at this time. In previous years, especially with items the BVS had assisted on, there had been permission granted to discuss at the November meeting with the board members. This year, due to several factors, conversations about legislation were still on-going and she could not comment yet on potential bills for the agency's legislative priorities.

Mr. Lesinski asked about the 21 new hires for VVCC. AC Combs stated that VVCC is starting a new training program to train and hire Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) to meet demand as VVCC is currently using temps. This will create a pipeline and they can hire the trainees as staff instead of continually using temps.

Ms. Alford also stated that there is a huge need in the Roanoke area for qualified healthcare workers in general and VVCC is constantly competing against other organizations and facilities for highly trained healthcare workers and the new training program will hopefully meet that need in the area.

Del. Murphy asked about the women veterans assistant program manager position. Ms. Alford thanked her for bringing that up and stated that it was not on the list in the presentation because Del. Murphy had already agreed to patron the budget amendment and has been working with DC Walker and Ms. Alford on that budget amendment.

The presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting via electronic mail. Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Alford for her presentation and introduced Ms. Brandi Jancaitis from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS).

Ms. Jancaitis gave the board a briefing on the **Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families**. A handout was included in the packet (*Attachment 5*) to correspond to the PowerPoint presentation.

The Governor's Challenge brings together statewide interagency team to develop and implement a strategic action plan to improve suicide prevention efforts for Military Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF). Ms. Jancaitis is working closely with DVS staff – VVFS staff in particular. Virginia was one of seven states chosen by SAMSA, a federal agency, and Secretary Carlos Hopkins (Veterans and Defense Affairs) and Secretary Daniel Carey (Health and Human Resources) are co-leads for the Governor.

She stated that the Challenge builds on the Richmond Mayor's Challenge. She cited some statistics:

- There were 259 violent deaths of veterans in Virginia, with 89% were suicide deaths
- Veteran decedents were 3 times as frequently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Among veterans with a mental health diagnosis, PTSD was especially elevated for ages 20-24 (37.5%), 25-34 (28%), and 35-44 (18.8%)
- Highest number and percent of female veterans since VVDRS began collecting data

She explained the messaging campaign the team came up with – the 3 C's

1. Care: Provision of culturally competent and accessible behavioral health and support services.
2. Connect: Bring services (SMVF-specific and mainstream) together to form systemic partnerships.
3. Communicate: Educate community members and services providers on military culture

and resources.

Highlights from the first year of the program included:

- VDVS, DBHDS, VAMC, CSB and National Guard partners hosted Regional Military Culture and Suicide Prevention Summits:
 - Radford (70 attended)
 - Abingdon (65 attended)
 - Fairfax (125 attended)
 - Lexington (65 attended)
 - Suffolk (90 attended)
 - Henrico (110 attended)
- DBHDS started a SMVF Work Group with Community Services Boards to finalize behavioral health services enhancements for community system transformation for the STEP VA initiative.

Ms. Jancaitis shared budget request information with the board members. Since the SAMSA grant award did not come with funding, requests through the participating agencies to the Governor and General Assembly have been made.

- **Cross Agency Budget Request for State FY21/FY22** (*pending Governor and General Assembly approval*)

DBHDS

- To enhance trauma-informed clinical capacity in Community Services Boards (CSBs) to provide outpatient mental health services to SMVF.
- To expand Lock and Talk Virginia Lethal Means Safety Campaign to additional CSBs and National Guard.

DSS

- To enhance 2-1-1 resource line capacity.

DVS

- To expand peer and family support, benefits services, and women veteran program capacity.
- To host regional SMVF training events (building on the Military Culture and Suicide Prevention Summits from Summer of 2019).

Ms. Jancaitis also mentioned a new pilot program “VISR” that began on Nov. 1 and goes through September 1, 2020 – to recruit community agencies to **Identify** SMVF, **Screen** for suicide risk, and **Refer** to resources.

The presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting via electronic mail. Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Jancaitis for her presentation and introduced Ms. Palumbo who gave a presentation on DVS’s Employment & Transition programs.

Ms. Palumbo stated that VTAP is the “boots on the ground” to reach transitioning service members before they leave service. VTAP staff are on bases around Virginia, meeting TSMs and telling them about the programs and resources available. The VTAP team are all trained career coaches and assist with resume writing, resources, skills assessments and being the point person on bases for transitioning service members. VTAP now has a permanent team of one manager,

one analyst, and three regional transition coordinators.

VTAP has implemented the Hire Vets Now Fellowship Program which is an MOU with the Mid-Atlantic Navy Region, V3 companies and the Virginia Chamber Foundation to do internships under the Skillbridge program. Over 500 inquiries have been made, with over 100 applications and so far 5 service members have completed the internship program and all 5 have been offered employment. VTAP and Virginia Chamber of Commerce Foundation have partnered up to host Hire Vets Now networking events on military installations across the Commonwealth. These events allow service members to meet and interact with participating businesses.

Ms. Palumbo stated that the Entrepreneurship program was started to ensure veterans were getting connecting to information on pursuing, starting, or running businesses. The position is currently open, since the person who was hired as the Entrepreneurship Coordinator had been an entrepreneur himself and left the agency after nine months. But in that time, he created a driving interest in entrepreneurship and with partner organizations since he was a point person. He completed the SBA Boots to Business program and reached out to several organizations to start building the ecosystem. He created graphics and handouts and showed that the three problems for veteran entrepreneurs are – access to capital, community – you don't build up community relationships in the military because you are always moving, and training is a problem.

The Entrepreneurship Coordinator helped start the pitch contest as part of the Women Veterans Summit, which was wildly successful and generated a lot of interest with women veterans. Ms. Palumbo stated that Ms. VanTull would go more in-depth on that.

There were no questions for Ms. Palumbo.

Ms. VanTull began her presentation with the video from the Virginia Women Veteran Summit that had been held in May in Hampton, VA. [https://youtu.be/-wY_jIVJKl8]

Ms. VanTull mentioned that she is a staff of one and works with veterans of all eras and has been engaging with several state and national partners and hosting roundtables with Delegate Kathleen Murphy in the past year. There were three roundtables in 2019 with over 100 participants. The last one was held the day before at Dominion in Richmond and went very well. This year the roundtables focused on giving women veterans information on starting a small business, entrepreneurship and financial services. Ms. VanTull said she is planning for the present and building for the future and she will be sitting down with Del. Murphy to plan next year's roundtables.

She talked about the Virginia Women Veterans Summit that had been in Hampton in May and the wonderful turn out of over 800 women veterans and 57 exhibitors. Both the presentation and video were distributed to the council members after the meeting, and are available upon request.

There were no questions for Ms. VanTull. The presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting via electronic mail.

New Business

Special presentation – off agenda:

Before the beginning of the official “New Business” section of the meeting, Chairman Dick called up his predecessor Jim Icenhour and AC Combs. AC Combs then presented Mr. Icenhour with a plaque in appreciation of his term of service as a Chairman of the BVS. Mr. Icenhour thanked everyone for the plaque and the opportunity to serve.

Legislators’ pre-session reports

Senator Reeves stated that he was still reviewing legislative options but he was looking for veteran-friendly bills to patron and will again work with Del. Filler-Corn on the constitutional amendment process they began last year. He mentioned that he had been working with the congressional delegation on the federal legislation for veteran treatment courts, HR886, which would create \$500M in the federal budget for localities to start up veterans courts and would be helpful in expanding the veterans treatment dockets in Virginia.

Delegate Murphy said she too is reviewing legislation and is focused on the funding for the second women veterans coordinator.

Ms. Alford stated that Delegate Helsel is retiring, and Del. Miyares’ apologized for not attending but was with his family on vacation. Ms. Alford said that she had spoken with Del. Miyares’ legislative aide and they are working through potential legislation as well.

Ms. Alford reminded the board that the legislators serve “coincident with their term of service” and as there has been an election they will all need to be reappointed by the new Senate Rules Chair and Speaker. The agency will send its recommendations, but the appointments are up to the senator and Speaker.

Ms. Kathy Owens asked whether anyone was looking into the possible effects ratification of the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) might have on veterans issues, in particular the effect it might have on DVS women veterans’ programs, and whether a legal opinion could be sought on the issues. The Chair responded that DVS would probably be the appropriate entity to handle the question, perhaps in consultation with the Secretariat and/or the Attorney General’s Office. The Chair asked Acting Commissioner Combs to look into the matter and report back to the Board.

Draft 2020 Bylaws

Chairman Dick stated that the draft amendments to the Bylaws were distributed at the August 22 meeting and via email. These are changes to reflect the Code changes that will go into effect on January 1 with the sunset of the Virginia War Memorial Board and BVS assuming those duties. Chairman Dick asked if there were any questions or comments. There was none. Chairman Dick called for a motion to approve the amendments to the Bylaws. Mr. Icenhour made a **motion, seconded** by Del. Murphy. The motion passed **unanimously**. (*Attachment 6*).

Vote to Support DVS Legislative Agenda items in 2020

Chairman Dick asked if there should be a vote since no legislation has been presented to the board. Ms. Alford stated that they could vote to support the DVS agenda generally or they could strike the line from the agenda since she was unable to give a briefing on legislation. Chairman Dick called for a motion to strike the item from the agenda. Mr. Icenhour made a

motion, seconded by Ms. Kathy Owens, the motion passed **unanimously**.

Discussion about board member roles & responsibilities during 2020 Session

Chairman Dick asked Ms. Alford to give a briefing on Session. Ms. Alford stated that she had copied the pages in the members' handbooks into their agenda packets and had edited the JLC Guidelines for JLC Day for BVS members. She reviewed their roles and responsibilities as the agency's advisory board and ran through the tentative schedule of the JLC Day on January 15 and other important days during Session.

She discussed legislative town halls and other events with the legislators before and during session which the board members should attend in their local areas. The handout is *Attachment 7*.

Approve 2020 BVS Meeting Schedule

Chairman Dick stated that the proposed meeting dates, as in their agenda packet for 2020 are:

May 14

August 20

November 19

Chairman Dick said that given the nature of the budget and legislative cycle and how they could not get a full briefing on legislation and budget from the agency he would like to propose that the BVS move the proposed November 19 meeting to sometime in December in order to ensure the Board would have the opportunity to consider and discuss the legislation and budget items. Ms. Alford mentioned that there was precedent for a joint meeting with the JLC – upon their invitation – in December. JLC Chairman Wickersham immediately extended the invitation.

AC Combs said that the meeting could be held in the new War Memorial expansion where there will be a large room that can be partitioned off if the two boards want to do part of the meeting together and part independently – but that Ms. Alford would have to run back and forth as she administers both boards. Ms. Alford said she would simply make sure all necessary board duties would be taken care of at earlier meetings so there would be no need to separate out and they could do a joint board meeting for the entire time.

Chairman Dick called for a motion to strike the November 19 meeting and substitute in a joint meeting with JLC on December 16. Mr. John Lesinski made a **motion, seconded** by Del. Murphy, the motion passed **unanimously**.

Reports from the Working Groups

Ms. Julie Waters mentioned highlights from her report, including that they had been working with DGS (Virginia Dept. of General Services), RIFF (Richmond International Film Festival) and organization called DC Power of Fashion on exciting opportunities for veterans who are artists. She asked for support in the action items in the report:

- Soliciting artists for an outdoor installation, interior art displays, and for On the Square events in the spring.
- Spreading the word about the RIFF fellowship program to veterans who may be interested in entering the film business.

- Spreading the word about the DC Power of Fashion to veterans who may be interested in entering the fashion business – as designers, models or event planners.

The Veterans and the Arts work group report is *Attachment 8*.

Mr. Michael Dick gave an update from the Education Working Group, highlighting from their submitted report in the packet that the questionnaires for the school administrations and students was sent out to ODU and responses were received from approximately 150 ODU students.

The group members are still sorting through the data, but realized that the questions need to be tweaked and less open-ended. The survey questions will be revised to capture race and gender data and the open ended questions will be revised in an effort to better highlight critical and recurring issues impacting student veteran success.

The group anticipates gearing up soon with the revised survey and getting it out to the remaining schools identified in 2020. Mr. Dick is working with the schools to set up on-campus visits with the tentative timeframe listed in the August report. The report is *Attachment 9*.

Mr. Carl Bedell gave an update from the Benefits Working Group and the result of interviews with DC Herthel and Benefits Director Williams is the issue of staff salaries has risen to top level risk for the continued success of DVS, as Ms. Alford had stated in her presentation. The working group submitted FOIA requests for state employee data has analyzed the data to determine the severity of any salary disparity. Not all of the job titles are the same, even for attorneys, which has made comparisons somewhat difficult but the picture is getting clearer that DVS staff are underpaid compared to other agencies. The working group makes one recommendation:

Recommendation: Increase funding for DVS Benefits staff salaries. This increase should, at a minimum, normalize salaries with other state employees in similar positions.

Since this was a request of DVS to the Governor for the next biennial budget, the board will delay a formal action until after the budget is introduced. The report is *Attachment 10*.

“Good of the Order” Reports

Mr. Jim Icenhour gave the members an update on the DMV Armed Forces Medal Special License Plate Study work group which convened to study the issue of fees for license plates with military medals and commendations. Mr. Icenhour passed around a handout from the DMV and asked Mr. Greg Escobar, the DMV Military and Veterans Liaison to give an update. Mr. Escobar thanked the BVS members who had participated and stated that DMV presented four options to the stakeholders for potential recommendation to the House Transportation Committee.

Upon review and consideration of the options, the stakeholders recommend that no newly authorized military medal license plates be granted a waiver of either the standard registration fee or the special plate fee. They also agreed that the fees for the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart should remain unchanged. All newly authorized plates for recipients of medals that fall between the Medal of Honor, ranked first in the order of precedence, and the Purple Heart should be authorized for issuance with a \$10 one-time fee and the standard registration fee. Any license plate for recipients of medals falling below the Purple Heart in the order of precedence should be

authorized for issuance with a \$10 annual fee and the standard registration fee. Additionally, all medals falling within the top ten medals in the order of precedence that are not already authorized for issuance should be authorized. (*Attachment 11*).

Chairman Dick reminded everyone that they will be receiving an email to fill out their economic statements of interest soon and to please do so promptly.

Chairman Dick also expounded briefly on Senator Reeves' comments about the veterans courts bill. He said that if the legislation passes, the program will be housed within the Department of Justice. Additionally, he mentioned a bill by Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton (DC) to formalize coordination of law school veterans clinics.

There were no further Good of the Order reports from board members.

Public Comment

There were no individuals seeking to make public comment.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

ATTACHMENT 1

BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

American Legion, Dept. of Virginia HQ
1708 Commonwealth Ave., Richmond
November 14, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:00 – 10:02)
- II. Roll Call and Quorum Determination – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*, (10:02 – 10:07)
- III. Introduction of DVS staff and guests – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:07 – 10:20)
- IV. Approval of Agenda and August 22, 2019 Meeting Minutes – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:20 – 10:22)
- V. Reports (10:22 – 10:35)
 - a. Joint Leadership Council – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Chairman*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Frank Finelli, VSF Chairman*
 - c. DVS Update, *Steven Combs, Acting Commissioner*
- VI. Presentations (10:35-11:45)
 - a. Proposed 2020 DVS legislation and budget – *Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Policy Director*
 - b. Presentation on Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide, *Brandi Jancaitis, Military and Veterans Affairs Manager, DBHDS*
 - c. Update on Programs for Veteran Employment & Transition: VTAP/Hire Vets Now, Entrepreneurship & Women Veterans – *Charlie Palumbo, Director of Employment & Transition*
- VII. New Business: (11:45-12:15)
 - a. Vote on By-laws amendment proposed at August 22 meeting, *Michael Dick*
 - b. Vote to support DVS legislative agenda items in 2020, *Michael Dick*
 - c. Discussion about board member roles & responsibilities during 2020 Session, *Michael Dick, Chairman & Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Policy Director*
 - d. Approve 2020 BVS meeting schedule, *Michael Dick*
 - e. Reports from Work Groups, *Julie Waters, Michael Dick, Carl Bedell*
 - f. Legislators' pre-session reports, *Senator Reeves, Delegates Helsel, Murphy & Miyares*
 - g. "Good of the Order" Reports, *All Members*
- VIII. Public comment (12:15 – 12:20)
- IX. Wrap Up & Adjourn – *Michael Dick, Chairman* (12:20-12:25)

ATTACHMENT 2



101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Fifth Baptist Veterans
Ministry
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association*

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES November 14, 2019

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) met on October 16, at the American Legion in Richmond.

We received a thorough and informative update on the DVS employment and transition programs, were introduced to the new VTAP program manager and received a report from the Women Veterans Program, including a report on the 2019 Women Veterans Summit.

Our main task at this meeting was to finalize our priorities list for 2020. In addition to the 2 letters to send to Governor Northam on issues of importance to the JLC, in July, the JLC voted to move two of the 10 potential initiatives for 2020 off the list and write letters of support instead. Of the remaining 8 priorities, two were put in “the parking lot” and the remaining six became the final list of initiatives for 2020. We feel this is a very strong list of initiatives and look forward to working with the new General Assembly during Session to advocate for our active duty, veteran and Guard. Please find the Summary Matrix of our 2019 Policy Priorities as an addendum to this report.

The Council provides advice and assistance to the Governor, General Assembly and the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) on matters of concern to the veterans community and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.

Our next meeting will be December 18 at 10 a.m. at the American Legion Headquarters building in Richmond.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank G. Wickersham, III
Chairman

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



101 N. 14TH ST, 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA, 23219

Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fifth Baptist Church
Veterans' Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Summary of 2020 JLC Policy Initiatives

Each policy paper can be accessed at: <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2>

Initiative	Recommendation
JLC 2020-01 <i>2nd Resolution – Personal Property Tax Exemption</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve legislation, and send to the voters via ballot initiative, creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans.
JLC 2020-02 <i>Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day</i>	That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that directs Virginia registrars receive and count military overseas absentee ballots postmarked on or before election day and which arrive by 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the results of the election.
JLC 2020-03 <i>Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federally adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.
JLC 2020-04 <i>Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate when they are called to SAD in emergency situations.
JLC 2020-05 <i>Tax Credits for Employers who Hire VNG and Reserves</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members.
JLC 2020-06 <i>Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY20 and \$1,000,000 in FY21 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS

	<p><i>Letters of Support</i></p> <p><i>In 2019, the JLC voted to show support for four issues via letters of support rather than inclusion in the formal list of policy initiatives</i></p>
<i>Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Families</i>	<p>The JLC hopes that focus on this important issue in Virginia will lead to potential cutting-edge solutions and policies. We stand ready to assist the Governor and the members of this Challenge in any way needed. As a starting place, at our April 17 meeting, we voted unanimously on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a commitment to pass out the cards from the Governor's challenge; 2. Put the information about the Governor's Challenge and presentation on suicide prevention in VSO newsletters; and 3. Send a formal letter through the Chairman to the Governor supporting the Challenge and committing to support its' efforts.
<i>Funding for new Care Centers in biennial budget</i>	<p>The JLC fully supports providing the funding necessary to open and operate our two new veterans care centers – the Puller Veterans Care Center and the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center – and requested the Governor include it in his introduced biennial budget for FY21-22. The JLC has always, and will continue to, support our commonwealth-run veterans care centers.</p>
<i>Commonwealth Connect - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians</i>	<p>The JLC supports the Governor's efforts to fund VATI with \$50M in funding to help Virginia's progress towards universal broadband access. Several member VSOs have signed on as Commonwealth Connect Coalition partners.</p>
<i>Virginia National Guard Scholarship</i>	<p>The JLC supports the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs efforts for a Virginia National Guard Scholarship program to fully cover Guardsmen seeking a degree or certification in Virginia to bring Virginia in line with other states' National Guard benefits.</p>
	<p><i>Each letter will be posted to the JLC website after submission to the Governor and Secretary of Veterans & Defense Affairs</i></p> <p>https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2</p>

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



ATTACHMENT 3

VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION

Report to the Board of Veterans Services

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees met on September 19, 2019 at the American Legion Department Headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. The Development and Finance Committees also met on the same date and at the same location. The Procedures and Policies met on August 6, 2019 in Richmond.

Chairman Finelli provided the Board an overview of accomplishments during Virginia FY20 including efforts to improve fiduciary oversight, enhance fundraising, and raise awareness of DVS programs, culminating in the Smithfield Foods check presentation ceremony with Governor Northam on August 22, 2019. He also presented a three-prong VSF fundraising strategy with a goal of \$800k focusing on pursuit of existing donor pipeline, grass roots initiative for new donors, and development of corporate sponsors. Secretary Hopkins also presented priorities relating to the Governor's Challenge on Suicide Prevention.

The Development Committee discussed the Foundation's revenue priorities for FY20 that includes a Veterans Day direct mail letter and recruiting businesses to host a fundraising event benefitting the Foundation. Other campaigns planned will involve reaching out to the 200 top Virginia Businesses and V3 Companies. The Pipeline continues to be updated as Trustees make contact with various donors.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Proposed FY21 FY22 Budget presented by the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). It was proposed that before voting on the budget breakdown for the individual programs, it would be appropriate for the Trustees to hear from the various DVS program directors about their needs in order to use that information in support of fundraising activities. The DVS directors will be invited to the December meeting to provide an overview of their expected needs in FY21 and FY22. The Finance Committee approved a number of recommendations that included the appropriation of \$796,500 for DVS programs.

The Procedures and Policies Committee coordinated a broad range of actions relating to updated Bylaws and policies. The committee reviewed and recommended copies of the revised Bylaws, policies #1 and # 2 and legislation to be presented for approval before the Board.

The Foundation approved the 4th quarter financial report for FY19 with over \$635,000 in donations and also noted that expenditures in FY19 were at the highest recorded at a total of \$621,801. The Board approved the Finance Committee's recommendations regarding the Non-general Fund amount of \$796,500 for FY21 FY22.

The Foundation remains committed to increasing donations to sustain the rate of expense and looks forward to working with DVS as they present their anticipated needs for our Virginia Veterans and their families for the upcoming years. A strong collaboration between the Foundation and DVS will result in identifying and assisting additional Veterans and their families, who are in need.

The 2019 Dominion Energy Charity Classic took place on October 17-19 at the Country Club of Virginia in Richmond. A portion of those proceeds will benefit the V3 program.

The Foundation welcomed Robin Beres and Dr. Doug Cox to the Board of Trustees. Nicole Carry and Dr. Jack Lanier were also reappointed by the Governor.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for December 12, 2019, location TBD.

Respectfully Submitted,
Frank Finelli
Chairman
Veterans Services Foundation

ATTACHMENT 4
Acting Commissioner's Report to BVS



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Steven J. Combs
Acting Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
Fax: (804) 786-0302

Memorandum for: Chairman Michael Dick
Members, Board of Veterans Services

From: Steven J. Combs, Acting Commissioner

Date: November 14, 2019

Subject: Department of Veterans Services update

Agency Leadership Changes

Keta Fetters has been hired to lead the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP), succeeding Alison Foster.

Charlie Palumbo will be stepping down as Director of Transition & Employment. Ross Koenig, V3 Program Manager, will be filling in as Acting Director.

New/Relocated Offices

- Fort Belvoir: opened for operations on October 1, 2019
- Danville: office relocated due to mold. Temporary operating location in VEC building for approximately 4-6 months until new space is found.

DVS Highlights

- The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program passed the 55,000 veterans hired mark.
- DVS has submitted a formal request to convert fifteen of the domiciliary rooms to short-term rehabilitation rooms to meet demand for this service in the Roanoke area.
- More than 1,200 people attended the Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial on November 11. Governor Ralph Northam delivered keynote

address. GEN Paul Funk (TRADOC Commander) and Secretary Carlos Hopkins also spoke.

- The VVCC Float was a highlight of the Veterans Day parades in Roanoke (November 9) and Floyd (November 11).
- DVS cemeteries were “dressed” for Veterans Day with flags on gravesites and the “Avenue of Flags” erected at each cemetery. A link to an article in the Suffolk News Herald is here: <https://www.suffolknewsherald.com/2019/11/08/flags-placed-to-remember-veterans/>
- Donna Harrison, Criminal Justice Director, spoke at Veterans Day events at the Buckingham Correctional Center (over 60 veterans in attendance) and Deerfield Correctional Center (over 220 veterans);
- A DVS Attorney helped a homeless veteran obtain substantial retroactive payments at the Board of Veterans Appeals (Board). The Veteran had been homeless on and off for over three decades primarily due to untreated mental disabilities, including schizophrenia. Veteran had been trying to get service-connected for his mental disability dating back to the early 1990s, and VA consistently denied his claims. Veteran refiled in 2010 and appealed the denial to the Board. The Board advanced his case on the docket due to homelessness, and DVS Attorney took his case, diligently sifted through his medical and military personnel records, drafted a detailed persuasive brief, and convinced the Veterans Law Judge to service-connect his schizophrenia with an earlier effective. This resulted in retroactive payments of \$300,000 with a monthly compensation at the 100 percent evaluation. Veteran was able to use the monetary award to stabilize his life – he receives medical and mental health treatment, is no longer homeless, and is living a stable, productive life;
- Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax visited Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center on Veterans Day;
- Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker is serving as President of the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) – a key leadership role in advocating for GI Bill Certification programs. Other DVS team members lead NASAA committees.

Upcoming DVS Events

- Wreath laying ceremonies at state and national veterans cemeteries: December 14, times vary by cemetery;
- State offices closed:
 - Noon on November 27 – November 29 for Thanksgiving
 - December 24-25 for Christmas
 - January 1 for New Years
 - January 17 for Lee-Jackson Day
 - January 20 for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day;
 - February 17 for George Washington Day
 - Veterans Care Centers 24/7 operations

Construction Projects

The Department of Veterans Services has four major construction projects and three smaller-scale construction/renovation projects underway, and is planning for one additional large-scale project.

1. Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk
 - a. Project Summary: installation of 7,000+ pre-placed outer burial containers (crypts), extending in-ground full-casketed burial capacity by approximately 8-10 years; expansion of the cemetery administrative building, adding much needed work and storage space; installation of new emergency generator; replacement of the main cemetery entrance sign; and construction of new decorative fence along Milner's Road;
 - b. Target completion date: December 2019;
 - c. Comments: material and manpower shortages have delayed construction.
2. Virginia War Memorial, Richmond
 - a. Project Summary: construction (expansion) of Shrine of Memory to honor Virginians killed in action during the wars of the late 20th Century and the 21st Century; new exhibit and education space, including Medal of Honor Gallery and distance learning center; and new underground parking garage;
 - b. Target completion date: early 2020;
 - c. Comments: construction delays related to materials and manpower.
3. Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, Virginia Beach
 - a. Project Summary: construction of new 128-bed veterans care center, which will offer long-term skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative care in an in-patient facility. All-private rooms organized into eight 16-bed "households" with shared dining/living space;
 - b. Target completion date: Fall 2021;
 - c. Comments: change in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) design requirements allowed DVS to rework design, adding more beds, but at a delay of approximately 12 months. All design documents submitted to USDVA for final grant approval, and are under review. Awaiting release of USDVA grant funds. USDVA reviewing multiple state projects and will release funding for all projects at once. Awaiting release of funds earmarked in FFY18 and FFY19 USDVA budgets.
4. Puller Veterans Care Center, Vint Hill (Fauquier County)
 - a. Project Summary: construction of new 128-bed veterans care center, which will offer long-term skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative care in an in-patient facility. All-private rooms organized into eight 16-bed "households" with shared dining/living space;
 - b. Target completion date: Summer/Fall 2021;
 - c. Comments: change in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) design requirements allowed DVS to rework design, adding more beds, but at a delay of approximately 12 months. All design documents submitted to USDVA for final grant approval, and are under review. Awaiting release of USDVA grant funds. USDVA reviewing multiple state projects and will release funding for all projects at once. Awaiting release of funds earmarked in FFY18 and FFY19 USDVA budgets.

5. Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond
 - a. Project Summary: replacement of emergency generator with new “whole house” generator sufficient to operate all systems in the event of commercial power failure/loss;
 - b. Target completion date: Spring 2020;
 - c. Comments: grant request submitted to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). 100% drawings submitted to USDVA. Awaiting release of funds earmarked in FFY19 USDVA budget.
6. Virginia Veterans Care Center, Roanoke
 - a. Project Summary: boiler system replacement;
 - b. Target completion date: November/December 2019;
 - c. Comments: part of ongoing capital improvement/replacement plans.
7. Virginia War Memorial, Richmond
 - a. Project Summary: repairs to existing Shrine of Memory and Hargrove Plaza;
 - b. Target completion date: late November 2019;
 - c. Comments: part of ongoing capital improvement/replacement plans. Concurrent with (but separate from) new construction project. Funded through state “maintenance reserve” pipeline.
8. Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia
 - a. Project Summary: application submitted to USDVA for \$4M grant to install 4,000+ pre-placed outer burial containers (crypts), extending in-ground full-casketed burial capacity by approximately 8-10 years;
 - b. Target completion date: TBD (dependent on approval of USDVA grant application);
 - c. Comments: project kickoff meeting with USDVA held November 13, 2019.

ATTACHMENT 5

Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families in Virginia

Background of the Governor's Challenge

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through a call to action for state and local communities to implement the VA's [2018-2028 National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide](#). The aim of the National Strategy is to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) using a comprehensive public health approach. The National Strategy provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and contributing to a national focus on Veteran suicide prevention. This initiative advances the National Strategy by facilitating state-wide policy to practice implementation plans.

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the Nation. According to 2017 Center for Disease Control (CDC) data, 47,173 people died by suicide¹. In 2017, the suicide rate for Veterans was 1.5 times the rate for non-Veteran adults and the rate of suicide among women veterans was 2.2 times the rate among non-Veteran women. The VA estimates that 17 veterans die by suicide every day (2017); 11 were not connected with the VA for healthcare prior to their deaths.²

According to the Virginia Violent Death Reporting System (VVDRS), 3,250 veterans or service members (approximately 23% of total suicide deaths) died by suicide in Virginia from 2003 to 2017³. In 2017, there were 259 violent deaths among Virginia Veterans – 230 (89%) were suicides. The use of a firearm is the lethal means in most veteran suicide deaths with 72% dying by firearm compared to approximately 50% for civilians. Building on the success of the Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among SMVF, state-level policy makers are partnering with federal, state, and local leaders to implement a comprehensive plan informed by lessons learned and evidenced-based best practices in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Key Issues for SMVF in the Community Crisis System

- There is a lack of education and communication between military-related and civilian healthcare providers, as only 8% of behavioral health providers (not VA or TRICARE affiliated) report having high military cultural competency⁴.
- Many community providers lack awareness of the number of veterans they are serving and of the resources available to them.
- Community programs and services within often duplicate efforts or create gaps due to a lack of collaboration.
- Partnerships are key across healthcare and community supports for the best outcomes.
- Follow-up contact (caring contact) protocols are critical after treatment as this is one of the highest risk periods of a crisis – risk of suicide death is the highest within the first 30 days of discharge⁵.
- Veteran and family member peers can support clinicians/crisis treatment facilities in providing trauma-informed care and promote recovery and community re-integration.

¹ "National Suicide Statistics". Center for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm>.

² 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp.

³ Virginia Violent Death Reporting System, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Virginia Department of Health. A National Violent Death Reporting System project. <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/medical-examiner/fatality-review-surveillance-programs-reports/virginia-violent-death-reporting-system>.

⁴ Tanielian, T., Farris, C., Epley, C., Farmer, C., Robinson, E., Engel, C., Robbins, M., Jaycox, L. (2014). Ready to serve. RAND.

⁵ "Suicide Prevention". SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions. <https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/suicide-prevention-update>

Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families in Virginia

The Governor's Challenge in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Governor Ralph Northam is a physician and Army veteran who understands, first-hand, challenges that service members may face while on active duty, in their transition to civilian life, and beyond. He has made veterans' health issues, particularly behavioral health, a top priority of his administration. The Virginia Governor's Challenge is co-led by the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Carlos Hopkins, and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Dr. Daniel Carey. The team membership includes federal agencies, including Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense; state agencies, including the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the Virginia National Guard, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, Virginia State Police, and Virginia Department of Education; and other health partners including the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association and National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Richmond Behavioral Health Authority.

The theme of the Virginia Governor's Challenge is the "3Cs – Care, Connect, and Communicate":

- **Care:** The provision of accessible and culturally competent behavioral health services.
- **Connect:** Bringing military/veteran specific and community services together; forming systemic partnerships.
- **Communicate:** Educating the SMVF population on resources and community services providers on military culture and suicide prevention best practices.

Key Strategy Highlights for 3Cs:

- **Care Strategy:** Identify and support SMVF at risk of suicide through Asking the Question – *Have you or a family member served in the military?* – and suicide risk screening in community services.
- **Connect Strategy:** Increase engagement between Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), and partner organizations for SMVF referrals.
- **Communicate Strategy:** Expand lethal means safety (particularly firearm safety) training to community stakeholders.

It is imperative that organizations know the populations that they serve. Screening for military/veteran/family member status and suicide risk is an essential first step in getting behavioral health and support services to Military Service Members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF). Once identified, there must be efficient connections to services, as SMVF seek assistance through various sources. The Virginia Governor's Challenge team is ensuring that initiatives are in place to meet military and veteran families where they *live, work, and thrive*.

Conclusion

Building suicide safe communities with efficient access to care is essential to ensure that the Commonwealth of Virginia is the most military and veteran-friendly state in the Nation. Everyone has a role in preventing suicide. Your actions can save a life.

ATTACHMENT 6

BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES APPROVED BY-LAWS TO COMPLY WITH UPCOMING CODE CHANGES

Article I – Authority and Statement of Purpose

1. Authority: The authority for the Board of Veterans Services is found in § 2.2-2452 of the Code of Virginia (the Code).
2. Statement of Purpose: The Board of Veterans Services (the Board) is a policy board within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The Board is responsible for monitoring the welfare of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and setting policies to enhance veteran services across the Commonwealth.

Article II – Membership

1. Composition and Appointment of Members: The Board consists of 26 members, including seven legislative members, 15 nonlegislative citizen members and four *ex officio* members. Three members from the Senate are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. Four members from the House of Delegates are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Nonlegislative members are appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the Chairman of the Veterans Services Foundation, Chairman of the War Memorial Foundation Board, and the Chairman of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations serve *ex officio*.

ATTACHMENT 7

From the BVS Members' Handbook, pages 12-13

Legislative Time & During Session

You were appointed to the Board because of skills, knowledge and abilities you possess. You are to be an advocate for the Board, DVS and Virginia's veterans. You advocate by meeting with key stakeholders – legislators, their legislative assistants, other organizations working with veterans, groups in your communities and local government officials.

Responsibilities:

1. Be an advocate for Board and DVS priorities

- DVS has talking points and materials for you to use. Please use materials approved by DVS. If you write your own remarks or talking points please send to the DVS Policy Director for approval before the meeting or event.
- Use all methods: phone, emails, letters, social media, attend community meetings.
- Please work with DVS and BVS Chair on any letters to the editor or editorials and do not submit anything for publication as a member of the board without approval from the Chairman and DVS.

2. Connect with legislators on policy and budget priorities that the Board has set and voted on for the Session.

- One of the key groups to be an advocate for the Board and DVS is the legislature. Primarily, you should be building relationships with your Delegate and Senator, and if you are in an urban area, the members in the surrounding districts.
- If your county Board of Supervisors, City Council, Delegate and Senator, or other groups hold a pre-legislative session meeting, you are encouraged to attend.
 - You do not need to get up in the meeting or prepare remarks
 - However: Let DVS staff know you will be attending so they can get you talking points of what they would like highlighted in the upcoming session.
 - Introduce yourself to the elected officials and let them know you are a member of BVS.
 - Feel free to get up during the Q&A and ask a question related to veterans
 - Talk with the people who attend, feel free to hand out your BVS business cards. That is what they are for!
- Try to schedule a meeting with your Delegate and Senator before Session starts to brief them on the Board's initiatives for the Session and any proposed legislative initiatives approved by BVS.
- Definitely call/email the Legislative Assistants for your Delegate and Senator and make sure they know what BVS policy and budget initiatives are for the Session. Ask they have questions and if their boss is carrying any veteran-friendly legislation. **Relay all information to the DVS Policy Director.**

3. **Keep in communication with DVS** on policy, budget and strategic planning initiatives regarding your subject area. We're all on the same team with the same goal. We are here to support DVS, their staff and their mission.

Goals for Session:

1. Attendance at least one meeting of the General Assembly **Military & Veterans Caucus**

The meetings are every Wednesday morning at 8am from the 2nd week of Session through the end of Session. They involve presentations from agency and cabinet officials and other organizations working with military service members, veterans, and their families in Virginia. They also allow legislators to give updates on their legislation. They are very informative and a great way to get to know what is going on in Virginia and those working on veterans issues. DVS will notify Board members in advance with the meeting location and scheduled speakers.

2. **Visiting legislators to advocate for DVS** during Session

The Board of Veteran Services needs to be in the GAB promoting DVS, their budget and policy priorities. We are their advocate.

JLC DAY AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY 15, 2019

Guidelines for BVS Participants

R.s.v.p. to Carrie Ann by January 3

Goals for the Day:

- Advocate only for the DVS Agency policy and budget initiatives for 2020
- If the legislator is new (and we're sending you all to at least 1-2 new legislators) your main task is to educate them on how DVS assists Virginia's veterans.

Protocol:

- This is not a meeting. Participation is part of BVS membership but not mandatory
- You may request meetings with your Delegate and Senator but there is a lot of overlap on the board – please accept the assignments you are given.
- If you cannot obtain an appointment before the 15th, please ask Carrie Ann to assist.
- Do take meetings with the Legislative Aide (LA) if the legislator is not available.
- Do not ask questions about other legislation – you are there to advocate for DVS & veterans
- Do not offer personal opinions
- Respect the time allocated to you when meeting with legislators or their aides – they are on a tight schedule, as are we – you should have made multiple appointments!

Protocol When Meeting with Legislators:

- You are there representing the Governor, BVS and DVS – not yourself/VSO/political affiliation/etc.
- Be specific in your answers, if you do not know the answer to a question **do not speculate!** Write the question down and give it to Carrie Ann before the end of the day so she can respond to the legislator
- FEEL FREE TO TEXT CARRIE ANN TO COME JOIN THE MEETING – 804-316-4754

JLC's Goals for the Day:

- Increase visibility and credibility of JLC and its role as advocate for Virginia's veterans, military and Guard, and their families.
- Educate the new legislators on the mission of JLC
- Promote and build support for the 2020 JLC policy initiatives
- Promote DVS – its programs and services
- Show support for the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs and his initiatives
- Show support for the Adjutant General of the National Guard and his initiatives
- Show appreciation for the Executive and Legislative branches
- Continue to build strong relationships with our local Delegates and Senators!

The day will begin at 0700 at the Suntrust building with the JLC members. We will walk over to the GAB together and attend the GAMVC meeting at 0800

Logistics for the afternoon Session with leadership will be scheduled at the last minute due to the changes in the General Assembly – keep an eye on email for details.

There's a National Guard Reception that evening at the Library of Virginia – you are all invited to attend.

➤ **Questions?** Call or email **Carrie Ann Alford**

email: carrieann.alford@dvs.virginia.gov **phone:** 804-316-4754 (cell) or 804-225-4716 (desk)

ATTACHMENT 8

Board of Veterans Services

Veterans in the Arts Working Group – Report to the Board, 14 November 2019

Team:

Ms. Julie Waters, Chair

Mr. Carl Bedell

Mr. Victor Angry

Mr. Frank Reyes

Ms. Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Support Staff

Working Group Update:

Members from this working group have teamed up with several organizations to expand entrepreneurship opportunities for veterans in the arts:

- DGS has offered to partner with BVS to (1) provide outdoor space for an art installation by a veteran artist, and (2) put out a RFP for artwork to hang in state government buildings that is created by Virginia veteran-artists, and (3) allow BVS to host a veteran artist table at one or more On the Square events, at which veterans can promote and sell their work, and BVS members can talk about the work group and efforts to support Virginia veterans.
- RIFF Arts Institute is looking for applicants to its Winter Fellowship Program, and BVS assisted in publishing the request to veterans through the VTAP Transition Connection newsletter and promoting on social media. BVS and RIFF will continue to publicize opportunities to veterans for future fellowship cycles.
- DC Power of Fashion is a nonprofit organization that holds a fashion show every fall. For 2020, they will take on volunteers/interns for roles in the technical, creative, and business aspects of producing the show. BVS can assist by publicizing their request for intern applications. The working group and Power of Fashion are also discussing the possibility of an all-veteran fashion show in 2020.

Action Items:

The Working Group members request assistance in:

- Soliciting artists for an outdoor installation, interior art displays, and for On the Square events in the spring.
- Spreading the word about the RIFF fellowship program to veterans who may be interested in entering the film business.
- Spreading the word about the DC Power of Fashion to veterans who may be interested in entering the fashion business – as designers, models or event planners.

Looking forward:

This working group will:

(1) Continue conversations with current partnerships listed above.

(2) Continue to explore and engage in conversations with potential partners.

We request assistance from all Board Members in sourcing potential artists!

ATTACHMENT 9
Report of the Education Working Group, Michael Dick, Chair

November 6, 2019
From: Michael Dick
To: Board of Veterans Services

Presented below for the Board meeting on November 14, 2019, is a report concerning the activities of the Education Working Group.

1. On October 3, 2019, representatives of the Education Working Group (Paige Cherry and Mike Dick) met with Ms. Kristal Kinloch-Taylor, Director of the Military Connection Center, Division of Student Engagement and Enrollment Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. We also met with the president and vicepresident of the ODU Student Veterans Association (SVA).

2. This meeting with ODU representatives and the use of a questionnaire (discussed below) to shape the discussion was a particularly valuable first step in examining support to student veterans as the experience disclosed several issues that could be addressed to improve the collection of information on student veteran support. ODU staff and student veterans were tremendously cooperative and helpful in providing their time and candid comments, as well as administrative and technical support.

3. Prior to the meeting, a hyperlink to an online questionnaire was distributed to student veterans at ODU. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain initial information that would help focus the Working Group's further inquiry during oncampus visits. The questionnaire was developed and the resulting data collated with the technical assistance of ODU's Associate Vice President for Administration. Responses were received from approximately 150 ODU student veterans.

a. An initial review of the survey results disclosed the need to refine the questionnaire a bit. Specifically, we believe the survey's usefulness would be enhanced if data concerning the respondent's race and gender were elicited. Additionally, the open-ended nature of many of the questions on resulted in a wide variety of responses that made it difficult to extract and identify recurring themes from the data.

b. The survey questions will be revised to capture race and gender data and the open ended questions will be revised in an effort to better highlight critical and recurring issues impacting student veteran success.

4. Discussions with Ms. Kinloch-Taylor and the Student Veteran Association officers were illuminating and useful. Particular items of note included the following:

- ODU seems to have a well-developed and active student veteran organization and support structure.

- University leadership seems to recognize and support the needs of student veterans. In particular, the University Vice President for Administration was noted for being particularly engaged with student veterans. SVA leaders feel such engagement by a school's leadership is critical to veteran success.
- SVA leaders felt that communication between student organizations is very beneficial to the University as a whole.
- Communication at all levels, e.g., between student veterans, with other student government and veterans organizations, school leadership, etc., is very important.
- The SVA leaders liked the idea of a state-wide student veteran organization/network, but were unsure if such an entity exists.
- Communication between student veterans can be challenging due to the plethora of electronic communication avenues; e.g., private email, school email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. Consequently, communications are often sent over all available means in order to reach the widest possible group of veterans.
- Initial school and veterans-related orientations for student veterans are extremely valuable and should be stressed at every opportunity as most of the questions received by SVA leaders concern issues that are covered in such orientations.
- The Peer Advisors for Veterans Education (PAVE) is a useful program in which student veterans should be encouraged to participate.
- ODU anticipates initiating Green Zone Training in Spring 2020. (This article about Green Zone training at VCU is informative:
https://news.vcu.edu/article/VCU_Green_Zone_program_has_become_a_national_model_for_supporting)

5. Future actions: I am working with ODU to revise the questionnaire. Once that is completed, I will arrange to have the revised questionnaire distributed to the remaining schools and will schedule visits accordingly.

ATTACHMENT 10

Report of the Benefits Working Group, Carl Bedell, Chair

Overview

The Division of Veteran Services (DVS) Benefits section provides Virginia's veterans and their family members with accurate, timely and ethical education and assistance in obtaining the federal and state benefits they have earned through service and sacrifice to the Commonwealth and Nation. DVS operates 24 Benefits offices across the commonwealth. In FY 2018, DVS Benefit staff submitted 18,949 Compensation and Pension claims submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of Virginia's veterans. Disability and pension payments to Virginia veterans and dependents totaled \$3.2 billion in FY 2017.

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) convened a Benefit Services Workgroup (Workgroup) to study the strategy for continued growth of the DVS Benefit section and the obstacles that may hinder that growth; develop recommendations to support or strengthen the growth strategy and address any identified obstacles; study the current economic impact of received benefits by Virginia veterans and develop justifications for increased funding for DVS Benefits; interview Benefits staff to understand issues affecting employee retention and issues affecting or limiting service offerings; research other comparable state offerings to identify potential additional service offerings DVS could offer; and, analyze budget/funding issues and shortfalls and develop justifications for budget or funding increases.

The Workgroup members met with the current and former directors of Benefits to gain an understanding of DVS Benefit Services offerings and challenges to the continued growth of the Benefits offerings. DVS Benefits leadership indicated that a major factor in staff retention is the low-level of salaries for DVS Benefits staff relative to other state, federal and non-profit employees in similar positions. The Workgroup focused on this issue for FY 2019.

This report analyses the disparity of salaries between DVS Benefits staff and other state employees in the same employee role category. For DVS Appeals Attorneys, this report also compares their salaries to other state-employed attorneys. The working group obtained salary data through a Freedom of Information Act request for all Virginia state employees (see Appendix for definition and parameters of data). Analysis of this data found:

- The average salary for DVS Veteran Service Representatives and Appeals Attorneys is significantly less than other state employee in the same employee role category.
- DVS Appeals Attorneys have lower salaries than any other state employee categorized in an attorney employee role category.

Based on this analysis, the Working Group recommends that DVS receive increased funding for DVS Benefits employees. This increase in funding will reduce the disparity in salaries between DVS Benefits staff and other state, federal, and non-profit employees who perform similar roles.

Analysis

Overview of Data – The data set provided salary information for 85 DVS Benefits employees. The majority of the employees were categorized under the employee role *Prog Admin Specialist*

I (65 employees; 76.5 percent). Five additional employees were categorized under the employee role *Prog Admin Specialist II* (5.9 percent). All DVS Benefits staff categorized under *Prog Admin Specialist II* fill positions that require a law degree. The remaining 15 employees fell under management, administrative and training roles and are not the subject of this analysis.

Prog Admin Specialist I (Veteran Service Representatives)

This employee role encompasses the DVS Benefits Veteran Service Representatives. These staff are responsible for reviewing veterans' personnel, financial, and medical records and analyzing them in the context of benefits offered under the United States Code and Code of Federal Regulation.

The DVS Benefits salaries for this employee role ranged from \$40,000.00 to \$56,336.00 with an average salary of \$45,274.60. This average is \$2,031.71 (4.2 percent) lower than the average salary for this employee role in non-DVS agencies statewide.

Prog Admin Specialist I	Count	Average Salary	Min Salary	Max Salary
DVS Benefits	65	\$45,274.60	\$40,000.00	\$56,336.00
Other VA Agencies (Non DVS)	1,623	\$47,306.31	\$17,639.04	\$78,904.00

Prog Admin Specialist II – Appeals Attorney

This employee role encompasses the DVS Benefits Appeals Attorneys. Appeals Attorneys advise VSRs throughout the process, draft appeals for veterans denied benefits, and represent veterans before the Board of Veterans Affairs (in DC and by video in Roanoke) and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in Washington.

The DVS Benefits salaries for this employee role ranged from \$51,375 to \$55,485 with an average salary of \$54,160.20. This average is \$12,796.57 (19.1 percent) lower than the average salary for this employee role category in non-DVS agencies statewide.

When compared to state employees categorized in an attorney employee role, the salary disparity between DVS Benefits Appeals Attorneys and other state-employed attorneys is even greater. The lowest paid non-DVS state employee with an attorney position is \$62,000. The highest paid DVS Benefits attorney in a non-managerial role (i.e., an Appeals Attorney) is paid \$55,485.00. In other words, the highest paid Appeals Attorney is paid \$6,515 less than the lowest paid employee in an attorney employee role in any other Virginia state agency. The lowest paid DVS Benefits attorney in a non-managerial role (i.e., an Appeals Attorney) is paid \$51,375.00 or \$10,625.00 less than the lowest paid attorney in any other Virginia state agency.

Prog Admin Specialist II	Count	Average Salary	Min Salary	Max Salary
DVS Benefits	5	\$54,160.20	\$51,375.00	\$55,485.00
Other VA Agencies (Non DVS)	1,488	\$66,956.77	\$27,846.28	\$109,238.00
Other VA Agencies (Attorney Employee Roles)	77	\$88,402.40	\$62,000.00	\$129,000.00

Recommendation: Increase funding for DVS Benefits staff salaries. This increase should, at a minimum, normalize salaries with other state employees in similar positions.

Appendix

Data Source: The Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) provided a response to the Working Group's FOIA request with "a complete listing of all state employees by name, agency, ROLE code, ROLE name, work title, and salary." The DHRM provided the data as of September 12, 2019.

The data included salary information for 92,757 state employees. Per a disclosure from DHRM, the data did not include Virginia state employees who work for state agencies that are outside the Executive Branch or are considered to be political jurisdictions. The data does not include salary information from the following agencies: Virginia Port Authority, Virginia Tourism Authority, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Board of Bar Examiners, Virginia Workers Compensation Commission, State Corporation Commission, Virginia Retirement System, Auditor of Public Accounts, Virginia State Bar, Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission, Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission, Division of Legislative Automated Systems, Virginia House of Delegates, Senate of Virginia, Supreme Court of Virginia, Circuit Courts, General District Courts, Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, Combined District Courts, and the University of Virginia Medical Center. In addition, Virginia Tech and some of the other universities have positions that they designate as "local," and they do not report their salaries to DHRM. These are positions that are funded entirely from endowments or other non-state sources.

ATTACHMENT 11
**Summary of the Draft Report for the Armed Forces Medal
Special License Plate Study 2019**
As presented to BVS by Greg Escobar, DMV

During the 2019 General Assembly Session, Delegate David Yancey, Chairman of the House Transportation Committee, charged the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to convene a working group with relevant stakeholders to study the order of precedence of military medals and how the General Assembly might consider that order when authorizing and setting fees for license plates to be issued to recipients of such awards. Chairman Yancey additionally asked the stakeholders to (1) identify reliable sources of orders of precedence, both for individual service branches and across all branches; (2) identify the roles DMV and Department of Veteran Services (DVS) might play in assisting the General Assembly with determining the applicable order of precedence for any award for which a new plate is proposed; (3) consider options for applying the order of precedence to the structure of plate fees for military medal license plates moving forward; and (4) analyze the implications and options for conforming existing military medal license plates to any updated structure of plate fees.

DMV invited members representing DVS, the Board of Veterans Services, and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations to participate in the study. The stakeholders met once during the summer to discuss the study charge and develop a recommendation for the House Transportation Committee's consideration. The stakeholders' discussion included an examination of the fee structure for currently-issued military medal license plates, a review of the distribution of the standard registration fee, a review of the order of precedence of the medals, and a review of the relevant legislative history.

DMV presented four options to the stakeholders for potential recommendation to the House Transportation Committee. Upon review and consideration of the options, the stakeholders recommend that no newly authorized military medal license plates be granted a waiver of either the standard registration fee or the special plate fee. They also agreed that the fees for the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart should remain unchanged. All newly authorized plates for recipients of medals that fall between the Medal of Honor, ranked first in the order of precedence, and the Purple Heart should be authorized for issuance with a \$10 one-time fee and the standard registration fee. Any license plate for recipients of medals falling below the Purple Heart in the order of precedence should be authorized for issuance with a \$10 annual fee and the standard registration fee. Additionally, all medals falling within the top ten medals in the order of precedence that are not already authorized for issuance should be authorized.

Subject to approval by the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, this report will be submitted to both the House and Senate Transportation Committees in December of 2019.